



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

Smith - The Mexican War - 1847

US
5114
50

U55114.50



Harvard College Library

FROM

Hon. C. Hudson

Speech
of
Mr. C. B. Smith
of Indiana
SPEECH

OF

MR. C. B. SMITH, OF INDIANA,

ON

THE MEXICAN WAR.

Delivered in the House of Representatives of the U. S., Jan. 6, 1847.

WASHINGTON:
PRINTED BY J. & G. S. GIDEON.
1847.

is now found to have been eminently appropriate, and it is to be most sincerely regretted that it was not followed. Had that advice been taken and acted upon, we should not be compelled to mourn the loss of so many brave spirits, who now sleep in death upon the banks of the Rio Grande.

My own State has been a heavy sufferer. She was called upon to furnish three regiments of volunteers. The call was promptly responded to, and the men were furnished. They embraced within their ranks some of the noblest spirits of the State. Instead of being permitted to engage in active service—to share the dangers of the fight, and participate in the glories of the victory, they were left to pine and languish during the sickly months of summer and autumn upon the deadly banks of the Rio Grande. Many, ay, very many, of those brave spirits, who left homes surrounded by comforts and abundance, with their hearts beating high with hopes of fame and glory, have found a resting place for their exhausted and emaciated frames in the soil of a foreign land, without being permitted to face a foe. The Administration seems at last to have been convinced of the correctness of the views of Gen. Scott, and have given him the command in Mexico. But, as though already repenting this act of tardy and reluctant justice, they now seek to deprive him of the opportunity of gaining fresh laurels, by importuning Congress to authorize the President to appoint a lieutenant general, to take the supreme command. The sufficiency of Scott or Taylor for the command cannot be questioned, but they are both guilty of that most heinous of all offences, in the eyes of the Administration, of being Whigs.

But, Mr. Chairman, the President, with that gigantic intellect which has ever marked his career—with that penetrating genius for which he has been so eminently distinguished—not content to permit our army to conduct the war in Mexico, has been acting another part in the drama. Conceiving the idea, common to small minds, that more may be effected by low cunning and petty intrigue than by a bold, manly, and open course, he has been engaged in a base and contemptible intrigue with Santa Anna, an exiled tyrant, and a refugee from his own country. The object of this intrigue seems to have been to secure the return of Santa Anna to Mexico, and his re-instatement in power there, under the expectation that he would consent to make a treaty of peace. I should be glad if the President would inform us what consideration was stipulated to be paid to Santa Anna for agreeing to a treaty—how large a portion of the “two million appropriation,” so earnestly pressed upon Congress, about the close of the last session, was to be paid him to secure negotiations. Is this the end of all the vauntings we have heard about conquering Mexico, or chastising her into submission? Is the President, by an intrigue with a foreigner and an enemy, to effect that peace which he has been unable to obtain by arms? How becoming is such a spectacle in the head of this nation, and how must it raise our character in the eyes of the world, for a nation of twenty millions of people to attempt to despoil a feeble neighboring nation of a portion of her territory, by secretly fomenting domestic strife within her borders, and intriguing with the worst and most cruel of all her tyrants? Who is this Santa Anna, from whose elevation in Mexico President Polk seems to have anticipated so much benefit to the country? He is the most cruel and rapacious of all the tyrants which ever disgraced that country—perfidious and treacherous, as he is blood-thirsty and remorseless—avaricious and griping, as he is lying and deceitful—the perpetrator of most of the robberies and spoliation upon our

SPEECH.

JANUARY 6th, 1847.

The House resolved itself into Committee of the Whole on the state of the Union, and proceeded to the consideration of the bill to raise ten additional regiments for the increase of the regular army; and

MR. CALEB B. SMITH, of Indiana, upon whose motion the committee had risen on the previous day, being entitled to the floor, addressed the committee as follows:

MR. CHAIRMAN: The subject immediately before the committee is a bill which proposes to increase the army of the United States by adding to it ten additional regiments. As to the propriety of this measure it is to be expected that a diversity of opinion exists. For my own part, I have been unable to discover any reason in the condition and circumstances of the country to justify its adoption. By a law of the last session of Congress, the Government is authorized to increase the regular army more than six thousand men beyond its present numbers. During the past year the recruiting officers of the army have been actively employed in various parts of the country in efforts to procure enlistments to fill up the existing regiments to the limits authorized by that law. Their efforts have been comparatively fruitless. But few enlistments have been obtained, and the regiments yet remain unfilled. The difficulty of obtaining recruits for the regular army in this country is well known. While the demands for labor and the prices paid for it continue at their present rates, but few will be found willing to enlist as soldiers in the army. Those who desire to engage in the military service of the country would greatly prefer to enter the service as volunteers. This has been fully exemplified since the commencement of the present war, by the alacrity and zeal with which volunteers have flocked to the standard of the country in every State upon which a requisition has been made.

Does any member of this House believe that if this bill becomes a law, the number of men requisite to fill the proposed regiments can be enlisted? I do not believe that it is expected, either by the President who recommends the measure, or by those who support it. How can such an opinion be entertained in the face of the facts to which I have already adverted? Why, then, sir, is the bill so earnestly pressed upon Congress? Why should the brave volunteers, who, during the past six months, have exposed their lives to the pestilence and the sword, be treated with the contumely which this proposition implies? Why shall not the prosecution of the war be entrusted to them? Have they not shown that they are fully adequate to its prosecution, if prosecuted it must be? The President is now authorized by law to call into the field near twenty thousand volunteers in addition to those now called out. If more troops are requisite, why not call out these? We are urged to pass this bill with great haste, because it is said the regiments are needed for immediate service, before the commencement of the sickly season in Mexico. This only furnishes an additional argument in favor of calling out volunteers. The progress of enlistment is always slow, and before any considerable number of regular soldiers can be obtained, the winter and spring will have passed away, and the malignant diseases of Mexico will have set in with all their force.

Why, then, I again ask, is this bill to be passed? To this question but one answer can be given. To officer ten regiments will require the appointment of between five and six hundred officers. If volunteers are called into the field, they will select their own officers. Under the provisions of this bill the officers will be appointed by the President, and this vast increase of Executive patronage, I humbly conceive, to be the chief object of the bill. Is not the patronage of the Executive department of the Government already sufficiently overgrown? Has not its influence already been sufficiently baneful? Has it not already exercised a control over every other department of the Government? Has it not controlled the legislation of Congress? Has it not stifled the voice of remonstrance, and changed the opinions and the votes of members of this House? But, no; I will not say their opinions; for I have seen the votes of members changed, while their opinions remained unchanged. The vast influence of Executive patronage has been such, that that department now overshadows and controls every other department of the Government. And yet we are asked still further to increase it, by giving to the President the appointment of some five hundred additional officers. These officers will be appointed whether the men are enlisted or not, and the people will be required to support officers for the ten regiments, while there will not be privates sufficient to fill one-half of them. With the appointment of these officers in his hands, the President will find no difficulty in securing the passage of such measures as he may desire.

But, Mr. Chairman, the restriction of the "*hour-rule*" forbids that I should devote further time to the consideration of this bill. We are engaged in committee in the consideration of the state of the Union, and I desire to express my views of the existing state of our public affairs. I should be happy if, in doing so, I could find something upon which the mind could dwell with satisfaction—some interest of the people, the prosperity of which might form an exception to the general disasters in which we are involved.

No one, however strong and zealous a friend of the President, or however servile he may be in aiding to carry out his measures, can fail to see that the Government is daily and hourly sinking under the utter imbecility of the Administration which controls it. Contrast the condition of the country this day with that which it exhibited but less than two years ago. The present Administration came into power, less than two years ago, by a majority of the popular votes. Every department of the Government was controlled by its friends. It found a treasury full to overflowing—a revenue ample for all its wants—a national credit unimpaired—with a surplus of near ten millions in cash to meet any exigencies which might arise. The nation was at peace with all the world, while domestic prosperity and happiness marked every class of the people. Two years have not elapsed since that fatal 4th of March, and what, sir, is the condition of the country now? The ten million surplus which we then had has been wasted and spent—the Treasury, then so full, is now empty and bankrupt—the revenue which we then enjoyed has been cut down and diminished—the national credit has been so impaired that the obligations of the Government are hawked in the money markets, while no purchasers are found, except at a sacrifice—a national debt is already accumulating with fearful rapidity—the peace we then enjoyed no longer exists—but war, "*grim visaged war*," is now demanding its sacrifices of blood.

Extraordinary efforts have been made to stop discussion and prevent an investigation of the causes of the war. The friends of the President insist that we shall make no inquiries into the causes which have produced it. They desire us to sit quietly in our seats, and sanction, by our votes, all that the Executive has done, or may propose to do. If the Constitution has been violated—if the Executive has usurped powers which are not delegated to him by the Constitution—if he has made war upon a foreign nation, on his own responsibility, and without the sanction of Congress—no complaint must be made—no alarm must be sounded, under the penalty of being charged with giving “*aid and comfort*” to the enemy. History proves that in all ages of the world the advocates of tyranny have resorted to the cry of “*treason*”, to prevent inquiry into the acts of an usurping Executive. When Patrick Henry, one of the earliest and ablest defenders of civil liberty in America, was denouncing the tyranny and usurpation of George III. in a Virginia House of Delegates, he said: “*Cæsar had his Brutus, Charles I. had his Cromwell, and George III. may,*” but before he had time to finish the sentence, the panderers of the Crown shouted “*treason, treason.*” The same cry is heard now, and with the same object, to silence inquiry into Executive usurpation.

The honorable gentleman from Tennessee, (Mr. GENTRY,) has been denounced with a degree of bitterness but rarely witnessed in the discussions of this Hall, because he has spoken in plain and pointed terms of the course of the Executive in relation to the war. With what propriety can the President or his friends complain of any animadversions upon his conduct, when he has so far lost all self respect, and all regard for official decorum—has so far degraded the high station to which he has been elevated, as to attempt to stifle discussion upon his official acts, by charging those who express their honest opinions of his conduct with giving “*aid and comfort*” to the enemy? Does it become him to complain, who, in advance, and for the purpose of preventing any examination of his measures, has dared—ay, dared, to brand as traitors, a minority of this House? Sir, I should consider myself and those with whom I am politically associated, as deserving the reprobation of the country, if we should neglect to rebuke this insolent assumption of the Executive, and expose to the country his unconstitutional usurpations.

But, sir, we are told that it indicates a want of patriotism to inquire now into the causes of the war. A want of patriotism! Sir, is there no patriotism but that which delights in blood and carnage? Can love of country only be exhibited in urging our Government to overrun a foreign country—to sack and pillage the towns and cities of a neighboring republic—to desolate and lay waste the provinces of other nations? I have supposed that our patriotism could be vindicated by a different, a higher, a nobler course. The strongest claim to patriotism is evinced by an effort to keep our country in the right—to preserve unsullied its fair fame—to cause it to be respected abroad—to maintain in their purity the institutions of a free government—to guard and preserve our Constitution—the palladium of our liberties, from the rude assaults of an usurping Executive. The friends of the President insist, that, however proper inquiries into the cause of the war may be hereafter, they should not be made now. Wait till the war is over before these inquiries shall be pressed. Yes, wait till Mexico is conquered—wait till one-half her territory is annexed—wait till thousands of our brave volunteers perish in battle, or die under the influence of a foreign and deadly climate—

it. Let the territory be once acquired, and the question will be before us with all its force. The Missouri question for a time endangered the safety of the Union. The compromise which was then adopted, was applicable only to the territory acquired by the purchase of Louisiana. It has no application to territory hereafter to be acquired, and the same compromise cannot be expected in relation to such territory. If we acquire additional territory, the question must come before Congress and the country; and when it does come, it will come attended with a train of consequences more alarming than any which attended the admission of Missouri into the Union. The excitement which marked that contest, will be but as the mole-hill to the mountain, when compared with the convulsion which surely awaits this country whenever that question shall be forced upon us for settlement. It will be a convulsion which will shake the pillars of this Government to their foundations; and we may find, too late, amid the scattered fragments of our Union, that we have raised a spirit which we have no power to control.

Gentlemen from the North, who are opposed to the extension of slavery, base their hopes upon the "Wilmot proviso" which was attached to the "two million bill" at the last session. They anticipate that a similar proviso, declaring that slavery shall not exist in any territory which we may acquire from Mexico, will be attached to the same, or to some other bill, at the present session, and that this is to be a settlement of the whole question. Such calculations are, in my opinion, delusive and deceptive. The restriction, in regard to slavery, contained in the "Wilmot proviso," met my most cordial approbation; and I shall most cheerfully vote for the same proposition whenever it shall be again presented. It must, however, be apparent to every gentleman here, that that proviso is no settlement of this question. It is but the mere expression of an abstract opinion, which may be carried out hereafter, or may not. It by no means determines that the territory to be acquired shall be either slave or free territory.

The chief object of the present Administration seems now to be, to coerce Mexico into a treaty by which she shall agree to surrender to us a portion of her territory. If such a treaty shall be made during the term of President Polk, of course the treaty will be made by him. No one can doubt, that with his position, his sentiments, and his interest, as connected with this question, he will stipulate in such a treaty for all that the South can ask or desire in relation to slavery. Well, sir, suppose he makes such a treaty; it must be submitted to the Senate, and receive the votes of two-thirds of that body before it can be ratified. If the treaty shall stipulate for the introduction of slavery into the territory, can any sane man suppose that two-thirds of the Senate will vote for its ratification? Surely not. Well, suppose it shall stipulate that slavery shall not exist there; is it not equally clear that two-thirds of the Senate will not vote to ratify it? Placing the matter, then, upon the ground that a treaty shall be made giving us additional territory, and containing a provision either for or against slavery, it is a matter of absolute certainty, that such a treaty cannot and will not be ratified by the Senate. If a treaty shall be made which shall contain no stipulation upon the subject, and shall be ratified by two-thirds of the Senate, we shall then have acquired the territory; and the question will be immediately presented for the action of Congress, whether slavery shall exist there or not.

Are gentlemen desirous of testing the capability of this Union to resist a

shock of this character? Are they anxious to determine by actual experiment how much the different sections of this Union may be excited and inflamed against each other, without bringing about a separation? If they are not, I warn them to avoid this issue. I implore them not to put the Union to so severe a test.

I have attempted, Mr. Chairman, to point to the evils which necessarily result from the question of slavery, inseparably connected with the acquisition of Mexican territory. I have shown that if the territory is acquired, the great controversy between the North and the South, whether it shall be slave or free territory, must be met. Where, then, I would ask, is the ground upon which the patriot should stand? Sir, the only ground of safety—the only ground which will secure the peace and harmony of the country—the welfare and prosperity of the Union, is to keep the territory, with all the distracting questions connected with it, out of the Union. Upon this ground I stand. I am opposed to taking from Mexico one acre of her territory by force or conquest. I am opposed to extorting from her any cessions of territory as an indemnity for spoliations, or for the expenses of the war. Whatever may be our demands against Mexico, let their payment be required in some other way—by some other means, than by the dismemberment of her territory. I know of no portion of her territory which could be of service to us, except some of her harbors upon the Pacific. If these could be obtained by fair and honorable negotiation, I should have no objection to their acquisition. But beyond these I have no desire to see any more “annexation.”

The limits of this country are already sufficiently extended. We have now immense bodies of vacant and unoccupied territory, much more valuable for agricultural purposes than any we can acquire from Mexico. We have territory for the employment of all our enterprise for ages to come. Any further extension of our territorial limits, while it must greatly increase the expenditures of the Government, will weaken the bonds of our Union, and increase the dangers of its dissolution.

Gentlemen upon the other side of the House insist that we must prosecute the war until we “conquer an honorable peace.” How is this to be done? It has been found, after eight months’ trial, that the vaunting boast that we would “dictate the terms of peace from the halls of the Montezumas” is not of so easy accomplishment as was anticipated. It is possible, if we persist, that we may reach the capital of Mexico. We may seize every town and city in her dominions. It cannot be doubted that the people of the United States may, if they throw all their energies and resources into the contest, overrun Mexico, and take all her strongholds. It cannot be done, however, except at a sacrifice of life which it is frightful to contemplate. But suppose we incur the sacrifice and accomplish the object, will we have peace then? We may produce the quiet of desolation, and call it peace. The people of Mexico, influenced by that fortitude, stubbornness, or obstinacy, whichever you may call it, by which they are characterized, may still refuse to negotiate, still reject all offers to treat, and retiring into their mountains and fastnesses, wait the time when their desire for vengeance may be gratified. And if they should pursue this course, and still refuse to enter into negotiations, what course must our Government pursue? Shall we exterminate the race, until there shall be none left to dispute our authority? Shall we keep up a standing army there, to hold

possession of her towns and cities, while our people at home shall be taxed to meet the enormous expense it will occasion? These are questions which should be answered by those who have involved us in this war.

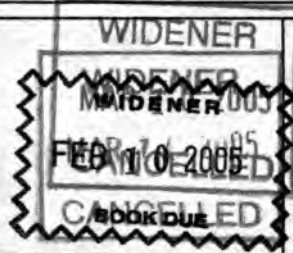
Sir, I most ardently desire to see this ill-fated war brought to a speedy close. I believe this desire is entertained by the great body of our people, of all political parties. The people look to those to whom has been confided the administration of the Government to adopt measures necessary to restore peace. There seems to be a vague and indefinite idea resting upon the minds of gentlemen, that the national honor requires that we should fight this war through, at whatever sacrifice, until we shall chastise Mexico into terms of absolute submission. They seem to fear that any relaxation of hostilities—any effort to stay the carnage of war—to stop the effusion of blood, will be dishonorable—that the world will conclude that the United States, with her twenty millions of people, is unable to cope successfully with the feeble and distracted nation of Mexico, with her seven millions. Those who are so very sensitive in regard to the honor of the country, should have manifested their regard for its honor before this war was commenced. I fear we have not added, in any degree, to our national honor, by commencing a war of conquest—by invading the territory of a neighbor. I have as high a regard, I trust, as any individual, for the honor of my country, but I would endeavor to preserve that honor by keeping her in the right—by urging, that, in all her intercourse with other nations, she shall pursue a course of strict justice and magnanimity. This in itself constitutes the very highest honor. "Be just, and fear not," should be the governing principle of nations as well as individuals.



The borrower must return this item on or before the last date stamped below. If another user places a recall for this item, the borrower will be notified of the need for an earlier return.

*Non-receipt of overdue notices does **not** exempt the borrower from overdue fines.*

Harvard College Widener Library
Cambridge, MA 02138 617-495-2413



Please handle with care.
Thank you for helping to preserve
library collections at Harvard.

